MINUTES OF MEETING OF COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 1926.

The first meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1927, was held on Wednesday, July 7, 1926, with the Public Buildings Commission, at the Senate Office Building.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Mowbray,
Mr. Medary,
also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer,

Secretary and Executive Officer.

Those members present representing the Public Buildings Commission were Senator Smoot, Chairman, Mr. David Lynn, Architect of the Capitol, and Mr. James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. ARCHIVES BUILDING: Senator Smoot submitted for consideration a letter which he received from the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., of New York City, suggesting that vaults be provided in the Archives Building for storing historical films, a number of which have been produced and that should be preserved, as McKinley's Inauguration, America, The Covered Wagon, Abraham Lincoln, Chronicles of America, Scenes from Theodore Roosevelt's life, Old Glory, Boston Tea Party, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and others. They suggested that storage space be provided for 20,000 reels that could be placed there now, and 30,000 additional in the future.

Mr. Moore said there are 500,000 World War photographs at the War College, and raised the question when films may be considered archives; also to what extent the Government might have control over placing commercial films in the Archives Building.

Senator Smoot referred the letter to Mr. Moore for reply (Exhibit A).

2. AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT BUILDING: Senator Smoot read a letter (Exhibit B), which he received from the Secretary of Agriculture, with regard to the location suggested for a department building on the north side of the Mall, opposite the present Agricultural Department Building, on land claimed by that Department.

In the consideration of this matter it was felt that no one Department should dominate the Mall and that as the Agricultural Department had a frontage on the Mall, with space in the rear for expansion, an additional building on the Mall for that Department is not warranted. Senator Smoot favored placing the Department of Commerce building at the location in question on the north side of the Mall, but was not in favor of taking the Patent Office out of its present building at Ninth and F Streets and moving that office into the proposed new Commerce building. Mr. Medary said a large six story building on the Mall as proposed would be objectionable. It is very important, he said, to keep a uniform skyline for the public buildings south of Pennsylvania Avenue and on the Mall.

3. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: Senator Smoot inquired where the National Gallery of Art should be located, and after consideration the Commission suggested that the best location in their opinion would be on the square between Four-and-a-half and Sixth Streets, adjacent to the Mall and where it would have a frontage on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was not thought advisable to locate the National Gallery of Art between Seventh and Ninth Streets, which involves the closing of Ninth Street and destroys the small cross axis provided for in that location on the McKim Plan for the Mall. Senator Smoot said he had received an offer from Mrs. Henderson to locate the National Gallery of Art on Meridian Hill and asked whether that location

was acceptable. The Commission advised that for a private Art Gallery Meridian Hill would be acceptable, but that the National Gallery of Art should have a place among the other great public buildings.

4. UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT BUILDING: Further consideration was given to the proposed United States Supreme Court building. The suggestion that the Supreme Court could be accommodated in the Capitol by constructing a separate building for Congressional Committees, was regarded a temporary expedient. It was strongly felt that the time had come to erect a building for the Supreme Court. Mr. Lynn called attention to the plan prepared by Henry Bacon but said as to the interior only a ground plan had been made. It was suggested that detailed information be secured from the Chief Justice as to the space requirements for the Supreme Court. Mr. Moore said he would attend to the matter (Exhibit C).

5. UNION STATION PLAZA AND ENLARGEMENT OF THE CAPITOL GROUNDS: Mr. Lynn advised that a satisfactory agreement had been reached with the officials of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad for buying the land needed to complete the purchase of the Union Station Plaza, and that final approval of the purchase is now in the hands of the Attorney General. Congress gave authority to buy this land in the Second Deficiency Appropriation Act, of the 69th Congress, approved July 3, 1926.

As soon as the Attorney General approves the purchase Mr. Lynn proposes to clear off the ground as fast as possible.

Mr. Lynn said he had been studying the plans that had been made for the enlargement of the Capitol grounds, by Peirce Anderson, and by Thomas Hastings, to include the Union Station Plaza, and that there seemed to be some difference

of opinion as to the treatment to be given this area. The Commission advised that the entire area comprising the Capitol and the adjacent squares should be treated as a unit and should be considered in connection with the development of Union Square at the head of the Mall. Mr. Lynn said he favored a development in this manner. Mr. Lynn suggested a street direct from the Union Station to extend southwest to Third Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, which would serve as a more direct approach from Pennsylvania Avenue to the railroad station and thus give a broader and less unobstructed area for the Union Station and Capitol Grounds development. The Commission concurred in this and said such a street from the Union Station would balance Canal Street south of the Capitol. The Commission had recommended that this new street to the Union Station be provided in considering the location of the new Conservatory near the Capitol.

6. NEW HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING: The Commission considered with Mr. Lynn the location proposed for the new House Office Building on the south side of the Capitol, and agreed with him that the building should be erected on the two squares on each side of South Capitol Street, between New Jersey and Delaware Avenues and B and C Streets. The Commission favored placing the building on the south end of the squares so as to allow a garden treatment at the north end of the squares, adjacent to the Capitol, to balance Union Station Plaza. Mr. Lynn said he felt that Congress will appropriate sufficient funds at the next session of Congress to buy these squares, which will include buying Congress Hall. South Capitol Street will be connected by a viaduct.

7. NEW POLICE COURT BUILDING: The Commission considered with Mr. Lynn the location proposed for the new Police Court Building in Judiciary Square.

Mr. Lynn did not favor the suggested location in Judiciary Square but said he thought necessary ground should be bought along Indiana Avenue opposite the District Supreme Court Building.

Mr. Lynn stated that, in accordance with authority granted by Congress, he had prepared plans for a Recorder of Deeds building, which is to include the Municipal Court, at the site east of the District Supreme Court Building in Judiciary Square.

The Commission adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

COPY

July 7, 1926.

Dear Senator Smoot:

Referring to the letter of Mr. Carl E. Milliken, Secretary of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., 469 Fifth avenue, New York City, referred by you this morning to the Commission of Fine Arts, you are informed that films sent to the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress to secure copyright are kept in a fireproof safe, with sprinkler attachment, until registered. They are then returned to the applicant, together with the proper certificates. At first, the Library undertook to build a receptacle for such films, but the number increased so rapidly, and the dangers were so great, that this method had to be abandoned.

The life of a film is uncertain. The fire hazard is prohibitive so far as public buildings containing other valuable materials are concerned. The Library of Congress itself undertakes to keep copyrighted photographs of historical events, that is to say, all photographs deposited for copyright are preserved, but the Library segregates those having historical value, and preserves them in such manner that they will be available for persons seeking such information.

The question immediately comes up, in connection with films, as to when such films would become public archives, subject to transfer to an archives building. The War College has a separate building for its photographs of the World War.

The proposition of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., is therefore one which cannot be settled offhand, but is subject to further and detailed consideration in conferences with the representatives of the Producers' association, as suggested in the last paragraph of Mr. Milliken's letter. With a view of gaining further information for you, I will be pleased to meet Mr. Hays at such time as may be mutually convenient.

I am returning the correspondence herewith.

Very respectfully, Yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Reed Smoot,
Chairman, Public Buildings Commission,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT A.

COPY

July 3, 1926.

Hon. Reed Smoot, Chairman,
Public Buildings Commission,
United States Senate.

Dear Senator Smoot:

A definite decision apparently has been reached by the Public Buildings Commission that the areas in the Department of Agriculture grounds fronting on B Street are to be utilized for the erection of a building for one of the other Departments.

The people in the Department of Agriculture have long hoped and anticipated that a building to house their own outlying activities would be erected on this site. These grounds have been in the occupancy of this Department for upwards of sixty-five years, and within the last few years recommendations have been made by the Secretaries of Agriculture for the erection thereon of a suitable building to accommodate this Department.

It is not my desire or my feeling to protest the decision of the Public Buildings Commission in this matter. The workers in the Department of Agriculture, who have long looked forward to a new home on this site, were not aware of this decision until reports were read in the newspapers. It seems to me that an opportunity should have been given the Department of Agriculture to have laid before the proper authorities its recommendations as might have had a bearing on the utilization of these grounds. No such opportunity was accorded the Department of Agriculture, and naturally the Department workers feel considerable regret at the course which apparently has been pursued by those in authority. It seems to me that this action is not conducive to promoting that spirit of cooperation and coordination in the administration of the affairs of the Executive Departments of the Government which should be promoted upon all occasions.

Sincerely yours,

W. M. Jardine,

Secretary.

EXHIBIT B.

COPY

July 9, 1926.

Dear Mr. Chief Justice:

After consultation between Mr. Lynn and the Commission of Fine Arts it was thought desirable to ask you to request some person or persons connected with the Court to write out the requirements for a new Supreme Court Building. It is necessary to know approximately the functions that should be cared for in that building. It is presumed that they will include such things as a reading room and writing room for visiting attorneys, besides ample accommodations for the Court and the individual justices. Mr. Lynn has furnished the Commission with Mr. Bacon's sketch plans.

Cordially yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. William H. Taft,
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
of the United States,
Washington, D.C.

EXHIBIT C.

Jun 15, 2017